

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARIS 12934 01 OF 02 031623Z
ACTION NODS-00

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 12934

NODIS

E.O.11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PFOR US VN
SUBJ: VIETNAM TALKS: MIA'S

SUMMARY: MIA'S AND RECOVERY OF REMAINS WERE DISCUSSED BY BOTH SIDES AS A SUBJECT ON WHICH PROGRESS WAS CONTINUING. VIETNAMESE CITED PRESENCE OF VU HOANG, DIRECTOR OF THEIR MIA AGENCY, AS INDICATION OF THEIR GOODWILL ON THIS SUBJECT. VU HOANG AND SIEVERTS HELD SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSION, AND VU HOANG ACCEPTED FURTHER LETTER AND DOSSIERS IN CONTINUATION OF "PERMANENT MECHANISM" ESTABLISHED BY WOODCOCK COMMISSION. END SUMMARY.

1. HOLBROOKE AND PHAN HIEN EACH REFERRED SEVERAL TIMES TO MIA'S AND RECOVERY OF REMAINS. HOLBROOKE STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUED PROGRESS IN THIS AREA, FOR ITS OWN SAKE AND AS ESSENTIAL ELEMENT IN NORMALIZATION PROCESS. PHAN HIEN NOTED MIA'S WERE ONE OF THE THREE MAIN POINTS COVERED IN THE AIDE-MEMOIRE GIVEN TO WOODCOCK COMMISSION, AND THAT "THE PROCESS ON THIS SUBJECT HAS STARTED AND IS DEVELOPING FAVORABLY," ALTHOUGH HE NOTED THIS SUBJECT REMAINS "INTERRELATED" WITH OTHER SUBJECTS SUCH AS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AND US AID.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 PARIS 12934 01 OF 02 031623Z

2. PHAN HIEN SAID HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD FURTHER INTENSIFY ITS EFFORTS TO SEEK MIA INFO AND REMAINS, BUT THAT THE TWO MISTAKES THAT HAD BEEN MADE IN IDENTIFICATION OF THE 12 REMAINS HAD CAUSED COMPLICATIONS FOR THEM. HE SAID A MAJOR EFFORT WAS BEING MADE TO RECOVER THE EATON AND GOLBERG REMAINS, AND THAT DOZENS OF GRAVES WERE BEING

EXCAVATED IN THE PROCESS, WHICH WAS CAUSING SOME DIFFICULTIES IN LIGHT OF TRADITIONAL VIETNAMESE CUSTOMS AND ATTITUDES ON THIS SUBJECT, AND IN VIEW OF THE AMOUNT OF EFFORT AND EXPENSE INVOLVED.

3. ON THIS NOTE HE AGAIN STATED THAT THE SUBJECT COULD NOT BE SEPARATED FROM THE QUESTION OF A US CONTRIBUTION TO HEALING THE WOUNDS OF WAR, NOT IN THE SENSE OF "BARGAINING," BUT BECAUSE THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE BEING ASKED TO HELP WITH THE SEARCH EFFORT WOULD ASK WHAT THE US WAS DOING TO HELP VIETNAM.

4. PHAN HIEN CALLED SPECIAL ATTENTION TO PRESENCE OF VU HOANG, THE SENIOR HANOI OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR MIA EFFORTS, AND FRANK SIEVERTS' COUNTERPART FOR EXCHANGE OF MIA INFORMATION, WHO HAD ACCOMPANIED PHAM VAN DONG TO AND WHO HAD REMAINED FOR THESE TALKS AT HIEN'S SPECIFIC DIRECTION. HIEN NOTED THAT HOANG AND SIEVERTS WERE IN FREQUENT COMMUNICATION, AND THAT THE MECHANISM FOR EXCHANGE OF MIA INFO DISCUSSED WITH THE WOODCOCK COMMISSION WAS "DEVELOPING FAVORABLY."

5. SIEVERTS AND HOANG HAD EXTENDED PRIVATE DISCUSSION COVERING NUMBER OF QUESTIONS RAISED IN THEIR CORRESPONDENCE. HIGHLIGHTS OF HOANG'S ANSWERS WERE: (A) HE CONFIRMED THAT TUCKER GOUGELMANN'S AND LT. FRYER'S REMAINS WOULD BE RETURNED SOON. (B) THE SEARCH WAS CONTINUING FOR OTHER REMAINS, INCLUDING EATON AND GOLBERG, AND IT WAS HOPED OTHER REMAINS WOULD BE RECOVERED BY THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 PARIS 12934 01 OF 02 031623Z

TIME THE GOUGELMANN REMAINS WERE READY TO EXHUME. (C) EFFORTS WERE UNDERWAY TO FIND INFORMATION ON THE CASES ALREADY RECEIVED. HOANG SAID THE INFO WAS USEFULLY PRESENTED AND SAID HE WOULD BE GLAD TO RECEIVE MORE CASES. (D) HOANG SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE IMPORTANCE OF SO STATING IN CASES WHERE NO INFORMATION COULD BE FOUND. (E) POSSIBILITY OF TUCKER GOUGELMANN'S ADOPTED FAMILY COMING TO THE US WHEN HIS REMAINS ARE RETURNED WAS BEING LOOKED INTO. SAIGON AUTHORITIES WERE IN THE PROCESS OF CONTACTING THE FAMILY ON THIS SUBJECT. (F) VU HOANG APPRECIATED THE INVITATION TO VISIT THE CENTRAL IDENTIFICATION LAB AND JCRC IN HAWAII AND SAID IF HE ACCEPTED HE WOULD WANT TO BRING SOME OF HIS SPECIALISTS ALONG. IF SUCH A TRIP SHOULD TAKE PLACE, IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO DO SO IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE RETURN OF THE VIETNAMESE REMAINS FROM THE CIL.

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PAGE 01 PARIS 12934 02 OF 02 031622Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 12934

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(G) VU HOANG ASKED AGAIN ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF MATERIAL AID FOR THEIR SEARCH EFFORT. HE SAID HE HAD RECEIVED THE US ARMY PUBLICATION ON "IDENTIFICATION OF REMAINS" AND NOTED THAT IN ADDITION TO PROVIDING USEFUL INFO, THE PUBLICATION ALSO REFERRED TO EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS NEEDED FOR SEARCH AND IDENTIFICATION. SIEVERTS SAID THIS WAS A SUBJECT THAT COULD BE DISCUSSED DURING A VISIT TO THE CIL. (H) HOANG CONFIRMED THAT HENCEFORTH THE PUBLIC IDENTIFICATION OF REMAINS WOULD BE WITHHELD UNTIL IDENTITIES HAD BEEN CONFIRMED AT THE CIL. (I) SIEVERTS GAVE HOANG FURTHER LETTER AS PART OF THEIR CONTINUING EXCHANGE SUMMARIZING SEVERAL OF THE ABOVE POINTS AND CONVEYING ADDITIONAL DOSSIERS ON EATON, GOLBERG, AND 12 OTHER SPECIFIC CASES IN NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAM.

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE SRV CLEARLY STILL HOPES THE MIA ISSUE CAN BE USED TO INFLUENCE A US DECISION ON RE-CONSTRUCTION AID, THEY APPEAR TO HAVE DECIDED TO HAVE THE SEARCH EFFORT GO FORWARD WITH AT LEAST A MODEST DEGREE OF EFFORT, AND TO RETURN REMAINS AS THEY ARE ACTUALLY RECOVERED. THEY APPEAR TO BE PLEASED WITH THE SIEVERTS-HOANG "PERMANENT MECHANISM" FOR EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION, AS EVIDENCED BY HIEN'S FAVORABLE REFERENCE TO IT AND BY THE DECISION TO KEEP HOANG IN PARIS FOR

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PAGE 02 PARIS 12934 02 OF 02 031622Z

THESE TALKS.
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Message Attributes

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